Illegal production and trade in opium

2668. SHRI GHUFRAN AZAM: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had constituted a high level committee to review the present arrangements for dealing with various aspects of drug problems;

(b) if so, by when the committee is likely to submit its report to Government;

(c) whether illegal production and trade in opium could be checked effectively; and

(d) if so, the details of the steps taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M. V. CHANDRASHEKHAR MURTHY): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Committee is headed by the Minister of State (Revenue and Expenditure). The Committee is expected to submit its report by 30.6.94.

(c) and (d) Production of opium in the country is regulated under strict licensing control and supervision by the Central Government. Various law enforcement agencies keep strict vigil over poppy cultivation and stringent penal measures are taken under the NDPS Act for any violation.

Riising of DA for calculating retiring benefits

2669. SHRI SHIV PRATAP MISHRA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that treating twenty per cent dearness allowance as pay for grant of retiring benefits to Central Government employees is very much on the low side: and

(b) if so, what steps Government propose to mitigate the hardships of reiring employees and by when the decision for raising the portion of dearess allowance for calculating the retiring benefits is likely to be taken and the date from which it would be operative?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M. V. CHANDRASHEKHAR MURTHY): (a) The Staff Side of the National Council of the Joint Consultative Machinery had raised a demand regarding merger of a portion of dearness allowance with pay for the purpose of certain service benefits. The demand was considered in the special meetings of the Standing Committee of the National Council wherein a package was agreed upon between the Official Side and the Staff Side. As per the agreed package, in the case of Central Government employees who retire or die on or after 16th September, 1993, a portion of the dearness allowance as linked to the average Consumer Price Index of 729.91 obtaining as on 1.3.1988, i.e. 20 per cent of the basic pay shall be treated as dearness pay for reckoning emoluments for the purpose of retirement gratuity and death gratuity only under the C.C.S. (Pension Rules), 1972.

(b) No proposal is under consideration of Government to raise the existing level of DA merger with pay for the purpose of death-cum-retirement gratuity.

Credit cards and Travellers cheques

2670 SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what are the names of banks whom Government have granted permission to handle credit cards and travellers cheques business;

(b) the names of banks whose applications are awaiting Government